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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this project was to produce a videotape of outstanding cooperating teachers and to use the tape to demonstrate effective methods for maintaining classroom discipline to student teachers. A set of six criteria for effective teaching was defined in terms of student behavior and the criteria were used to select seven teachers, five elementary and two secondary. These teachers were videotaped in action in their classrooms. The final tapes were edited in an editing studio and contained classroom scenes as well as interviews with the teachers. The tapes have been very useful in demonstrating practical approaches to classroom management. (13 references) (Author/GL)

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Production of a Videotape on Discipline to Help Student Teachers Improve Their Classroom Management Skills

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A Presentation made at the Annual Meeting of the
Association of Teacher Educators
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Abstract

For the past twenty years "discipline" has been identified as one of the most serious problem in our schools. If discipline is a problem for veteran teachers, it is that much more of a problem for the inexperienced student teacher. In spite of the widespread discipline problem, there are a handful of teachers in our toughest schools who regularly have well-mannered and hard-working students. The purpose of this project was to produce a videotape of some of these outstanding teachers and to use the tape to demonstrate effective teaching to student teachers. A set of six criteria for effective teaching was defined in terms of student behavior, the criteria were used to select seven teachers, and the teachers were videotaped in action in their classrooms. The final tapes were edited in an editing studio and contained classroom scenes as well as interviews with the teachers. The tapes have been very useful in demonstrating practical approaches to classroom management.

Production of a Videotape on Discipline to Help Student Teachers Improve Their Classroom Management Skills

Background to the Problem

The topic is Discipline! Or rather, the topic is how to help the typical student teacher with discipline problems in the classroom. In this presentation I shall describe some of the strategies I have used to help student teachers, including a project which produced videotapes of effective teachers. But before I address this issue, let me briefly sketch the conditions which led me to the idea of using videotape to demonstrate effective teaching styles.

In the 1960s I had been a high school teacher. After receiving my doctorate in 1969 I assumed a position at the University of Hawaii in which I had little contact with the public schools. And so, when I began going into classrrooms to coordinate student teachers in 1980, it had been fourteen years since I had been in the public schools on a regular basis. I was shocked at what I saw. On the campus outside the classroom I saw students drinking beer and smoking pot; there was graffiti nearly everywhere; and in many secondary schools an aura of intimidation hung over the campus.

That was outside the classroom. Inside the classroom there was an almost total disrespect for the teacher. Students repeatedly talked or shouted out when the teacher was talking; students spoke disrespectfully to one another; and there was little evidence of any sort of work ethic. I saw students slap the teacher on the back of the head, spit on the walls, throw books out the window. How could this be happening? I asked myself.

Most of the discipline problems, however, were not so serious. For the most part the disruptive behaviors were of

the insubordination variety: talking when the teacher was talking, sassing or talking back to the teacher, and refusing to follow classroom procedures. But nonetheless, the behaviors I saw were very disrespectful and not conducive to learning.

As a result, the student teachers under my supervision were having serious problems, and it was my job to help them. Since I met with my student teachers but once a week, it was impossible to initiate any in-depth training with them. However, in the weekly seminar I conducted I tried a number of different things with my students. My major efforts, which were spread out over a four year period of time, included the following:

1) I prepared handouts which summarized the major theories of discipline, including the works of Glasser (1980), Ginott (1971), Driekurs (1968), Jones (1987), Sharpley (1985), Dobson (1983), Tanner (1978), Chernow (1981), and Kounin (1977). This provided a theoretical framework with which to discuss discipline.

2) I used the "Systematic Training for Effective Teaching" program with the student teachers (Dinkmeyer, 1980). It contained of a set of audiotapes which portrayed a variety of classroom situations.

3) Several books identified the factors related to effective teaching (Emmer, 1984; Everton, 1984), and I condensed these research findings into a small booklet and developed a set of activities for student teachers to do in their classrooms. These activities have been helpful in making student teachers aware of the many factors which affect classroom discipline.

4) After attending an "Assertive Discipline" workshop I prepared a set of overhead projectuals which explained how a school principal might install Assertive Discipline in a school. Since many schools in Hawaii are currently using

Assertive Discipline (Canter, 1986), this has been very well received by my student teachers.

5) I currently have each of my student teachers develop a personal classroom discipline plan (Charles, 1989). This has been one of the most useful strategies I have used. By focusing on three types of discipline - Preventive, Supportive, and Corrective - my students become aware of the many components of an effective discipline plan of action.

In addition to these activities, I have used videotape to help student teachers improve their management skills.

Videotaping Student Teachers

In 1986 I started using an old Beta video camera to videotape my student teachers in action. In the beginning I made a lot of mistakes, but gradually, semester by semester, I have refined my approach until I have a fairly successful feedback mechanism for my students. I'd like to share some of my successes and failures with you.

Since cameras were not available to most of my students, I chose to do the videotaping myself. Let me begin by saying that it is not easy to carry a camera around to videotape student teachers. You must take a camera, a tripod, and any booklet or notes you wish to take with you. Logistically it is rather awkward. You must be motivated to do it, especially if you have to climb a hill or walk a long distance from your car to the classroom.

For the beginner, equipment is probably the major concern. When I began videotaping, I used the only camera available to me, an old Sony Beta camera which was sitting around the office. Today there are three main types of cameras on the market: VHS, Beta, and 8 millimeter cameras. Since most of my students have VHS videocassette recorders (VCRs) at home, I have opted to use the VHS format. The 8

millimeter camera is the smallest and lightest of the cameras, but 8 millimeter VCRs are not readily available in the community. For this reason I have decided to stay with the VHS format.

Video cameras now have so many excellent features that even the beginner can shoot videotapes of high quality. Perhaps the most helpful feature is the built-in VCRs which most cameras now have. This is helpful in two ways. First, it enables you to tell immediately if your camera is working properly. I always arrive to the class a few minutes early to test the system before I videotape. I set up the camera and shoot a minute or two of random classroom scenes. Then, by sliding a small door aside on the top of the camera, the control panel of the VCR is exposed. I rewind the tape I have just shot by pressing the "Reverse" button, then press the "Play" button. The scene then appears in the viewfinder. By plugging a small earphone into the side of the camera I can also listen to the audio of the scene I have just shot. In this way I know for certain that the camera is working properly. In the old days one did not know if the camera was working properly until after the taping. On more than one occasion I shot an entire lesson only to discover later that either the video or the sound was flawed. By taking a few minutes to check the system before taping, it is now possible to ensure a good videotaping.

The second advantage of having a VCR built into the camera is that it enables you to hook it up directly to a television set for viewing; you do not need a separate VCR. This is extremely useful in those situations when there is time immediately after the taping for you to view the tape with the student teacher.

Today's cameras also have zoom lenses which enable you to get close-ups of the student teacher from the back of the room. I am currently using a Panasonic AG-450 camera which

has a 10-1 zoom lens. The AG-450 also gives me the option of videotaping in either the VHS or S-VHS mode. The S-VHS mode is of much better quality, but it requires a special, more expensive videotape. I use the S-VHS format whenever I want to make copies of the tape or when I want others to view it, but I tape the student teachers in the VHS format. Today's cameras are of such good quality that you can purchase a camera suitable for taping student teachers for well under a thousand dollars.

I also consider a good quality tripod to be a necessity. My first two tripods were made of lightweight aluminum and cost about sixty dollars each. Unfortunately they were not very sturdy. I accidently bent the leg on one of them while it was fully extended, and I was unable to telescope it closed. The clamps on the legs of the other one gradually weakened, and after a year or so the legs would slowly collapse under the weight of the camera as I was videotaping. It was impossible to repair either of the tripods, and so for about two hundred dollars I purchased a sturdy tripod with a fluid head. This has been one of the best investments I have made. The head of the tripod is where you mount the camera, and it pivots from left to right and up and down. A fluid head enables you to smoothly pan the camera about in any direction, producing a smooth and non-jerky videotape. A tripod without a fluid head often sticks as you move it, producing video which looks as if the camera is jumping about. The purchase of a good quality tripod is well worth the money.

The third piece of equipment which I consider to be a necessity is a remote lavalier microphone. The small microphone, which is about the size of an olive, clips onto the student teacher's lapel, and the small battery pack attached to it by a small cord is clipped to a belt or placed in a pocket. When the student teacher speaks, his or her

voice is sent by radio wave directly to the camera where it is picked up by a receiving unit attached to the camera. The voice of the student teacher is thereby recorded on the videotape with great fidelity. This enables you to set up the camera in the back of the room, and even if the student teacher has a weak voice, it will be faithfully recorded on the videotape. A good quality microphone can be purchased for about one-hundred fifty dollars.

A good camera, a sturdy tripod with a fluid head, and a lavalier microphone are essential equipment for videotaping student teachers. All that remains is the videotape itself. Prices range from several dollars to more than ten dollars for a single tape. The quality of tape you purchase should depend upon the purpose of the tape. If you are just going to use the tape to record student teachers, then the least expensive tape will probably suffice. However, if you wish to make copies of the tape, or if you wish to use it as a teaching tape, then it is a good idea to purchase a better quality tape.

Good equipment alone will not ensure a good quality video. There are several other variables with which you must contend. The most important is lighting. When shooting in the direction of a row of windows or an open door, the light behind the subjects will cause the camera to record the faces of the subjects in very dark, unrecognizable tones. Whenever possible, it is advisable to shoot with the light source at your back. I always arrive a few minutes early so that I can analyze the classroom. I find the best place to position the camera so that it is out of the way and yet will not be adversely affected by the lighting. I shoot a few minutes of random scenes, then view it on the viewfinder. In this way I can maximize the quality of the video I shoot.

I should also say a few words about batteries, my major nemesis. Using an adaptor which comes with the camera, you

can plug the camera into the wall outlet and not use batteries. However, I prefer to move about the room as the lesson permits, and batteries will allow me to do so. The batteries are made exclusively for the camera and are rather expensive. A battery will run for about one hour, and it must be recharged after each use. I share the camera with several other members of my department, and on several occasions I arrived at a school to videotape only to discover that the batteries had not been recharged. In the interest of preserving faculty collegiality, we finally set up a system in our office whereby our secretary recharged the batteries after each use. But just in case, I also carry an extra battery with me at all times.

The batteries for the lavalier microphone can be just as troublesome as the batteries for the camera. The microphone holds one AA battery, and the receiving unit holds two of them. Both the microphone and the receiving unit have "on-off" switches, and, in spite of my best intentions, I sometimes left them in the "on" pósition. To avoid having dead batteries, I now remove the batteries after each shooting. And I carry a few extra AA batteries in the bottom of my camera case.

Once the student teachers have been videotaped, the logistics of viewing the tapes can be a problem. The first semester I videotaped I used just one tape. I would tape four or five student teachers on one tape during the week, then leave the tape in our Media Center. Each student was responsible for going to the Media Center to review his or her portion of the tape. Since some students lived in distant rural areas, some of them failed to view their tapes. The following semester I continued to tape four or five student teachers on the same tape, but instead of placing the tape in the Media Center, I gave it to students and asked them circulate it among themselves. This created even more

problems, for it took several weeks for the tapes to circulate, and on several occasions I lost track of the tapes.

I finally stumbled upon a system which works well. Each student purchases his or her own tape. I tape a student in action, give her or him an evaluation checksheet to complete, then leave the tape with them to view on their own. I leave it up to them to find a VCR. They keep the tape at school, and when I show up with the camera, they are to have it rewound to the proper spot so that I do not have to rewind it. I always tape each student teacher at least twice during the semester, and I view each tape at least once.

In addition to videotaping the student teacher in action, I try to capture the spirit of the class and the school in which the student teacher is teaching. In the classroom I shoot a closeup of every student, and I also shoot a few scenes from around the campus. At the end of the semester the student teacher then has a video record of their student teaching experience. I strongly suggest that they keep it for posterity so that years from now they can show it to their grandchildren.

The videotaping has been very useful. By capturing a disruptive classroom scene on tape, it is possible to sit down with the student teacher and cooperating teacher to analyze and discuss the problem situation. In every case in which I have recorded misbehavior, the student teacher has subsequently made significant improvement in their management skills. Having the discipline problem on tape forces both the student teacher and the cooperating teacher to come to grips with the problem. In some cases video is an excellent cure for weak or conveniently selective memories. Let's look now at a few scenes of actual misconduct I have videotaped over the past few years. As you watch, try to decide what you would do to help the student teacher.

Videotaping Effective Cooperating Teachers

As my expertise with video equipment improved, I searched for other ways in which I might use video to help my students improve their management skills. Of all the cooperating teachers with whom I had worked, only a few were truly outstanding. Some of these effective teachers taught in what might be described our "toughest" schools. It occurred to me that these teachers would make very good role models for my student teachers. If I could capture their personalities and teaching styles on videotape, my student teachers could see what highly productive teachers were really like.

With this idea in mind, my first task was to identify "effective teachers". I decided to evaluate teachers on the basis of how well their students behaved. I looked for teachers whose students consistently behaved in the following manner:

1) moved into, out of, and about the room in a quiet, orderly, and respectful manner;
2) were polite and listened when the teacher talked;
3) followed routines and directions without reminders;
4) began tasks promptly, stayed on task, and completed assignments on time;
5) avoided obnoxious, distracting, or discourteous behavior; and
6) achieved at a higher level than equivalent groups of students.

The idea was to focus on what the students did, not on what the teachers did. I had read many lists which tell teachers what to do, and over the years I had gradually lost

faith in such lists. I didn't care whether the teacher smiled or frowned, used positive behavior techniques or punitive ones, or shouted or whispered! I focused entirely upon the behavior of the students.

Using notes from my files, I applied the criteria to nearly two hundred cooperating teachers with whom I had worked. Seven teachers were outstanding on the criteria listed above, five from the elementary school level and only two from the secondary level. It is interesting to note that all of the teachers selected were very business-like and goal-oriented in their teaching. They rarely praise or reprimand. The class functions smoothly without marching orders. They students know what is expected and they do it.

Having identified seven effective teachers, I persuaded them to let me videotape them in action. Nothing special was planned for the taping session. I just showed up at the school early in the morning, set up my camera, and videotaped for an entire morning. This resulted in about an hour of footage for each teacher. I used these tapes in my student teaching seminar and they were extremely popular with my students. Here are just a few scenes of these teachers in action. I think you'll agree they project a confident approach to teaching.

Editing the Tapes

In spite of their popularity, much of the footage was of mundane classroom activities which were of limited instructional value. I decided to edit the tapes to eliminate the boring and irrelevant portions. And so, the following year I obtained a grant from our University's Educational Improvement Fund to produce several tapes on classroom discipline. I wanted to put titles on these tapes,

to edit out the non-instructional portions of the tapes, and to add interviews with each of the teachers.

It is possible to edit videotapes at home using two VCRs hooked together. However, the resulting tapes will have glitches of one kind or another on them. In order to edit properly, editing equipment is necessary. Because there were no editing facilities available to me, I joined a local editing club which lets individual members edit their own tapes on semi-professional equipment. The editing station I used was an elaborate one. It consisted of twenty pieces of electronic equipment, including seven VCRs, a time correcting unit, a computer, a genlock, three television monitors, two special effect machines, two video control panels, an audio control panel, and two audio cassette players. Learning the system was a bit overwhelming and required an abundance of both time and patience.

I encountered two basic problems with the editing. The first problem was selecting the parts I wanted to include in the finished product. There were so many good scenes that I had difficulty deciding which to include and which to exclude.

The second problem was with the editing equipment. There was about a second and a half delay between the time I hit the "Record" button and the time the scene was recorded on the master tape. Every editing cut I made became a guessing game; if the cut was not exactly right, I would have to redo it. In some cases I had to edit over and over again until the scene came out as desired. This greatly increased my editing time. Since I was paying for the use of the equipment on a hourly basis, I was soon over budget. As a result, instead of producing seven videotapes (one for each teacher), I only produced three. As time and additional money permit, I plan to edit the other four tapes.

There is a lesson to be learned here. In talking to many other persons who frequent the video editing studio, I have discovered that many beginners make the same mistake I made: they did not adequately prepare before beginning the project. If you intend to produce a classroom videotape, you should write a script before you begin. Meet with the teacher and plan the scenes you are going to shoot. Provide the teacher with the questions you are going to ask. Don't shoot from the hip as I did. If you plan, you will save yourself lots of time and frustration.

Concluding Remarks

I am very pleased with the results. While they are not of a professional quality, they are a cut above the unedited versions I have previously used. The tapes depict effective teachers in action; they demonstrate how effective teachers operate; they show that even students from "tough" school can and will behave properly if provided with strong leadership; and the interviews enables the teachers to express their philosophy of classroom management to beginning teachers. This gives the cooperating teachers the opportunity of making a significant contribution to Teacher Education.

I have shown the tapes to my student teachers for the past two semesters, and they have rated them as being extremely helpful. One of the greatest features of the videotapes is the fact that each of the three teachers have very different styles and personalities. One is loud, smiles and laughs, and talks constantly. The second speaks so softly she is difficult to hear; she never smiles but has a warm personal relationship with each child. The third is extremely serious, makes eye contact constantly to patrol the class. Yet in spite of their differences, they all have one

thing in common: they are very serious about discipline and do not tolerate misbehavior. And they do so very calmly, without hostility or anger.

To give you an idea of what the finished product is like, let's take a look at several scenes from the interviews. As you listen to each for just a minute or so, I'm sure you can detect the qualities which make them special. If there is a single most important theme which emerges from the interviews it is that the teaching of discipline must begin the first day of school and must be continually reinforced throughout the school year.

There is one final feature of the tapes which is worth mentioning. Because the tapes are of local teachers in local schools with local students, the student teachers perceive them as being much more relevant than commercial videotapes produced elsewhere. Last semester my students were so impressed with one teacher that we arranged a visit tc her classroom. It was a great experience for everyone: the student teachers were literally amazed at how smoothly the class functioned, and the visit further enhanced the teacher's role as a Teacher Educator with something of value to offer the profession.

If you have an interest in video cameras, I encourage you to experiment as I have done. By using real teachers in real situations in your own school districts, you can produce very useful videotapes. Even if you can't edit the tapes, even if they are not of "professional" quality, I'll bet they'll be more helpful to your student teachers than expensive commercial tapes.

This completes my presentation. Thank you for being such a great audience!

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